

A wide-angle photograph of a city skyline, likely Jacksonville, Florida, viewed from across a body of water. The skyline includes several prominent skyscrapers, including a tall, cylindrical building on the left and a tall, blue-glass skyscraper in the center. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds. In the foreground, there is a body of water and a low-rise building with blue columns along the waterfront.

# Climate and Environmental Concerns in the Top U.S. Real Estate Markets

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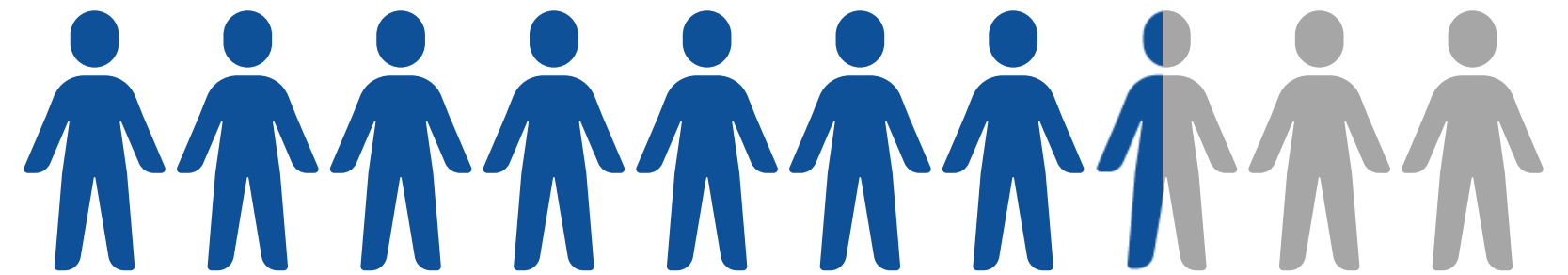
June 2022

# OVERVIEW

Over the course of the pandemic, the U.S. housing market has transformed due to increased work flexibility, lack of inventory, rising prices, and properties flying off the market. But homebuyers are not only facing a competitive housing market. In a world with increasing climate and environmental risks, nearly 75% of homebuyers and sellers<sup>1</sup> consider the environment when making the decision to buy or sell a home.

Homebuyers should be empowered with information to make healthier and wiser choices, which is why AreaHub provides the tools people need to understand the environmental issues they may encounter. From pollution to industrial and infrastructure hazards, extreme weather, and more, people may uncover the impact that environmental hazards can have on health and property values.

Using the “10 Hottest Housing Markets in 2022” ranking<sup>2</sup> by Zillow®, AreaHub aggregated environmental issues in these cities across multiple data topics to help people and businesses make more informed choices about the locations on their radar.



**Nearly 75% of People Worry About Climate Change When Buying or Selling a Home**

[Redfin News](#)



# About AreaHub

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AreaHub's climate and environmental platform informs individuals and businesses with clearly presented, scientific, and locally-relevant climate and environmental information to help them make more informed decisions. AreaHub is a tool to prepare "for what nature might throw at you."<sup>3</sup>

AreaHub's co-founders discovered the need for clear and accessible information when they searched for environmental hazard information in their communities. They were surprised how difficult it was to discover relevant environmental information at the local level. Leveraging their prior managerial, data processing, and startup experience, they built and launched AreaHub to empower people and businesses to make healthier and wiser choices in a world with increasing risks. AreaHub strives to inform users to make better decisions by providing credibly-sourced, data-driven insights about local climate and environmental hazards.

To learn more about AreaHub, visit [AreaHub.com](https://AreaHub.com)

# AreaHub's Data Topics

AreaHub aggregates many datasets to provide climate and environmental health information for up to 30 data topics

NATURAL		INDUSTRIAL	POLLUTION	INFRASTRUCTURE
coastal flooding	storms*		radon	cell towers
cold waves**	landslides*	superfund sites	air quality	high voltage lines
droughts	lightning**	brownfields	ground level ozone*	solid waste landfills*
earthquakes	riverine flooding	natural gas pipelines	particulate matter*	nuclear reactors
hail*	strong winds*	oil, gas & fracking wells	toxic releases*	power plants
heat waves**	tornadoes			underground storage tanks**
high winds**	winter weather			
hurricanes	wildfires			

\*Data available with AreaHub Premium (*coming soon*) or AreaHub Business Plans | \*\*Data only available with AreaHub Business Plans

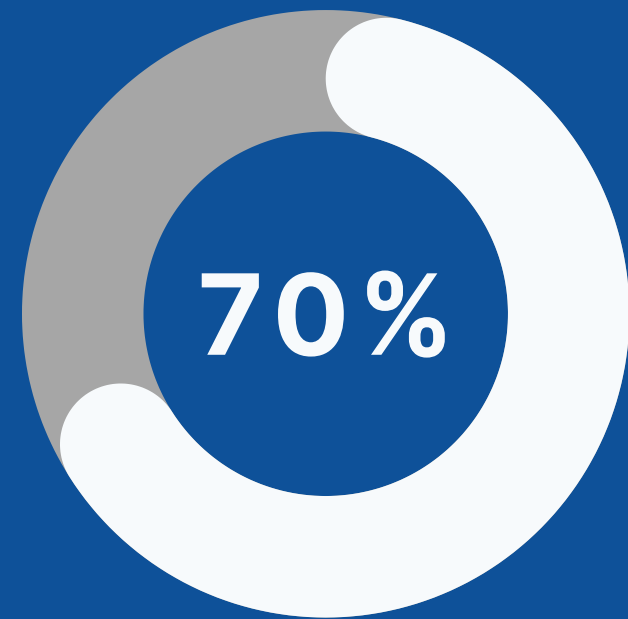


**We hear back from users who wish they would have known about AreaHub before making major life decisions, such as house hunting-- especially when relocating to a new area.**

**Whether our users are new parents purchasing a home in an unfamiliar place, remote workers relocating, college graduates on their own for the first time, or those looking out for older loved ones, AreaHub leverages data science and technology to provide an extensive climate and environmental picture surrounding a town or community, or coming soon with Premium, a home.**

Alison Gregory, AreaHub Co-Founder & President

# REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

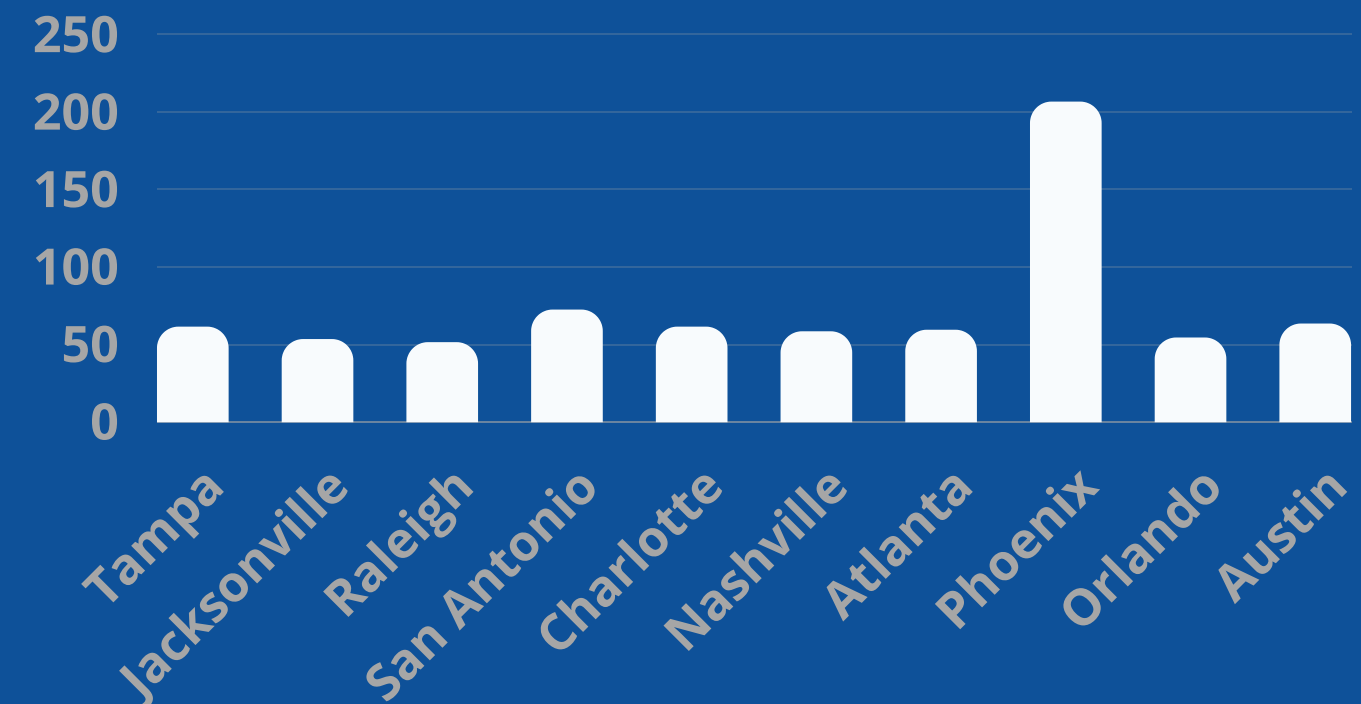


**Of the Hottest Real Estate Markets Contain Superfund Sites**

**70%** of the markets on Zillow's list contain **Superfund sites** within 5 miles of their center. Superfund sites are contaminated hazardous waste sites that, in some cases, impact health and/or property values.

**None** of the hottest real estate markets have a **“good” annual average air quality**, which would be an annual average air quality index at or below 50. All of the cities that made the list recently had a “moderate” annual average air quality or above, with Phoenix taking a top spot last year for worst air quality at an average annual air quality index of 206.

## Average Air Quality Index



**Here are some of the top  
environmental concerns  
for the hottest real  
estate markets of 2022 —→**

A photograph of the Tampa skyline at dusk, featuring several tall skyscrapers with illuminated windows. The buildings are reflected in the water of a river or bay in the foreground. The sky is a deep blue.

# 01. Tampa, FL

## Keep an eye out for...

Superfund Sites

Indoor Radon

Brownfields

Natural Gas Pipelines

Power Plants

Tampa's sunshine and proximity to Florida's beaches aren't the only reasons buyers are flocking to this area. Zillow<sup>4</sup> reported that Tampa's job market is thriving and home values are forecasted to increase by 24.6%.

### Some Highlights

Tampa, sometimes referred to as 'the **lightning** capital,' has **three Superfund sites** within five miles of its center, the most of any city on the list. Superfund sites are contaminated hazardous waste sites. The national Superfund list includes abandoned factories, mining operations, toxic waste dumps, and other sites with uncontained materials deemed dangerous. If you live near a Superfund site, you may want to learn about the hazardous materials there, how much has been cleaned up, and consider if you want to take steps, if any, to mitigate your family's or business' risk from exposure. Learn more about Superfund sites [here](#).

Tampa is also a **moderate Radon Zone**, which means average indoor radon levels for the county may be elevated. Radon is an invisible and odorless gas that is responsible for over 20,000 cases of lung cancer annually, according to the EPA.<sup>5</sup> Radon can invade a home or business, so if you are buying a property, insist on a radon test. Also, test regularly to monitor radon levels. Learn more about radon [here](#).

Other environmental issues to consider in Tampa include brownfields, natural gas pipelines, power plants, and air quality.



Coming in at number two on Zillow's list is another sunny Florida city, Jacksonville, where median sale prices are up 25.5% year over year (YOY), according to Redfin.<sup>6</sup> Located on the state's Atlantic shoreline, Jacksonville has more than 22 miles of beach and access to the St. Johns River. The city is known for its thriving art scene as well as craft beer and fresh seafood.

### Some Highlights

While **hurricanes**, like Hurricane Irma in 2017, are often the first thing that come to mind for cities along the coast, there may be other risks that warrant consideration. For instance, there are **152 brownfield sites** within five miles of Jacksonville's center, the most of any city on the list. Brownfields are potentially contaminated properties that are often abandoned or unused. The three most common contaminants found in brownfields are lead, petroleum, and asbestos. A study<sup>7</sup> published in Environmental Health Perspectives found significantly higher rates of mortality from cancer and respiratory diseases in communities with the highest density of brownfield sites. Before purchasing a property, check to see if there are brownfields in the vicinity and if there have been any clean-up efforts. Learn more about brownfields [here](#).

Other environmental issues to consider in Jacksonville include Superfund sites, natural gas pipelines, and high voltage lines.

# 02. Jacksonville, FL

Keep an eye out for...

Brownfields  
Hurricanes  
Superfund Sites  
Natural Gas Pipelines  
Power Plants



# 03. Raleigh, NC

Keep an eye out for...

Natural Gas Pipelines

Brownfields

High Voltage Lines

Power Plants

Zillow's next hottest area is Raleigh with median sale prices up 26.1% YOY according to Redfin.<sup>8</sup> Though it might not have 22 miles of beach access, this North Carolina city boasts 22 miles of hiking trails through William B. Umstead State Park, professional sports teams, and a lively downtown scene.

## Some Highlights

Of these 10 locations, Raleigh ranks second for most natural gas pipelines. There are a total of **five natural gas pipelines** within five miles of its center. Natural gas leaks and explosions are dangerous and can cause fires. Over the last 20 years, there have been an average of nearly 300 pipeline incidents per year<sup>9</sup> nationwide. When natural gas leaks, concentrated levels of methane may cause headaches, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, general weakness, and even loss of consciousness. Learn more about natural gas pipelines [here](#).

Other environmental issues to consider in Raleigh include brownfields, high voltage lines, and power plants.

Watch out Austin! San Antonio has taken a spot in the top four housing markets – bumping Texas' capital down the list. Redfin<sup>10</sup> reported that the city's median sale prices are currently up 20.5% YOY. San Antonio is home to the first UNESCO World Heritage Site, Missions National Historical Park.

### Some Highlights

San Antonio has a **high frequency of drought**. In the United States, drought is currently the second most costly form of natural disaster behind hurricanes.<sup>11</sup> Droughts can increase the probability of large-scale wildfires, reduce water quantity and quality which can lead to increased human illness and disease, reduce water availability necessary for productive farming, cause major ecosystem disruptions that can lead to reduction or extinction of local species, etc. While people in dry areas may not be able to avoid droughts, they can do their part to conserve water and contribute to their region's ability to manage limited water resources. Learn more about drought [here](#).

Other environmental issues to consider in San Antonio include include heat, Superfund sites, brownfields, air quality, and oil, gas, and fracking wells.

# 04. San Antonio, TX

Keep an eye out for...

Brownfields

Drought

Air Quality Index

Oil, Gas & Fracking Wells

A nighttime photograph of the Charlotte, North Carolina skyline, featuring several illuminated skyscrapers against a dark blue sky. The city lights create a vibrant, urban atmosphere.

# 05. Charlotte, NC

## Keep an eye out for...

Brownfields

Air Quality Index

High Voltage Lines

Drought

West of Raleigh on the South Carolina border, Charlotte's median sales price for homes have increased by 22.3% YOY according to data from Redfin.<sup>12</sup> This city is known for its sports teams, from NFL to NASCAR, and is also just 80 miles from the Appalachian mountains.

### Some Highlights

Compared to other cities on Zillow's list, Charlotte doesn't take the top spot for any environmental hazards in AreaHub's datasets. However, the city has 31 brownfield sites within five miles of its center and an average air quality of 61, but those numbers are still lower than many of the other cities. That said, it is still important to check the area you are considering to ensure that hazards like brownfields, drought, and high voltage lines won't affect your property.

Nashville, aka Music City, ranked sixth on Zillow's hottest housing market list this year with median sale prices up 31.2% YOY according to Redfin.<sup>13</sup> As Tennessee's capital, Nashville is home to a variety of entertainment, food, and distilleries.

### Some Highlights

Nashville has **nine oil, gas, and/or fracking wells** within five miles of its center. But Nashville is not alone in having wells as nearly 18 million Americans live within one mile of a well. Although research is not conclusive, emerging evidence hints that living within a mile of a well may be associated with health issues possibly caused by air pollution or groundwater contamination.<sup>14</sup> If you live near ongoing oil and gas activity, it is a good idea to find out what type of activity is taking place and, if necessary, consider water filtration and/or a quality air purifier in your home. Learn more about wells [here](#).

Additionally, Nashville has **85 high voltage lines** within five miles of its center. Although there is no evidence of a clear link to health risks, research continues because none have demonstrated living near high voltage lines is entirely safe,<sup>15</sup> either. Learn more about high voltage lines [here](#).

Other environmental issues to consider in Nashville include brownfields, natural gas plants, air quality, and indoor radon.

# 06. Nashville, TN

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**Keep an eye out for...**

Oil, Gas, & Fracking Wells

High Voltage Lines

Indoor Radon

Brownfields



# 7. Atlanta, GA

## Keep an eye out for...

Power Plants

Indoor Radon

Brownfields

Drought

Natural Gas Pipelines

According to Redfin,<sup>16</sup> Atlanta is seeing a 14.7% increase in median sale prices on homes across the city. The city is rich in history and culture with a lively food and entertainment scene.

### Some Highlights

Atlanta has a total of **10 power plants** within five miles of its center, eight of which are petroleum plants, along with one solar plant and one natural gas plant. While some power plants are cleaner than others, many may have an impact on the environment and surrounding areas. When living near a power plant, it's important to know its type of activity and the emissions that may be released from it.

Additionally, there are **82 brownfields** in Atlanta within five miles of its center. As previously mentioned, brownfields are potentially contaminated properties that are often abandoned or unused. The three most common contaminants found in brownfields are lead, petroleum, and asbestos. Learn more about brownfields [here](#).

Other environmental issues to consider in Atlanta include indoor radon, air quality, natural gas pipelines, and drought.

2022 is projected to be another great year for the housing market in Phoenix. Redfin<sup>17</sup> reported that median sale prices in the city are up 27.7% YOY. Phoenix boasts stunning desert hiking trails, numerous city parks, and a vibrant arts scene.

### Some Highlights

With an **intense wildfire season** last year, Phoenix had an **average air quality index of 206**, which is considered very unhealthy for everyone, but especially for children with asthma, the elderly, and people with heart or respiratory disease. Breathing polluted air may have serious health effects and may increase the number of asthma attacks, strokes, heart attacks, and respiratory infections; may irritate the lungs; and may reduce lung function and the body's ability to transport oxygen.<sup>18</sup>

Prolonged exposure to air pollution is also known to cause permanent lung damage and reduce lifespan.<sup>19</sup> To limit the effects of air pollution on your health, keep track of the AQI and reduce your exposure and exertion levels when air pollution levels are high. Learn more about air pollution [here](#).

Other environmental issues to consider in Phoenix include **heat**, radon, brownfields, Superfund sites, and natural gas pipelines.

# 08. Phoenix, AZ

Keep an eye out for...

Air Quality  
Indoor Radon  
Drought  
Riverine Flooding  
Brownfields  
Superfund Sites



# 9. Orlando, FL

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**Keep an eye out for...**

Brownfields

Superfund Sites

Florida's third city to make Zillow's hottest housing markets list is Orlando. Perhaps known first and foremost for its variety of theme park entertainment, Orlando is also becoming a major player in the real estate markets with Redfin<sup>20</sup> recording a 24.5% increase in median sales prices.

## **Some Highlights**

Relative to other cities on Zillow's list, Orlando doesn't take the top spot for any environmental hazards in AreaHub's datasets. The city has 15 brownfield sites within five miles of its center, low expected indoor radon levels, and a lower average air quality index than most of the other cities. That said, it is still important to check the area to be informed about your area's proximity to the city's Superfund site, brownfields, and about other local issues.



# 10. Austin, TX



Last year's number one hottest housing market has cooled down slightly in 2022, coming in at number 10 on Zillow's list. Redfin<sup>21</sup> has recorded a 12.8% increase YOY in median sales prices. Throughout the past few years, Austin has established itself as both a tech and cultural hub.

## Some Highlights

There are **11 natural gas pipelines** within five miles of Austin's center. Natural gas leaks and explosions are dangerous and can cause fires. Over the last 20 years, there have been an average of nearly 300 pipeline incidents per year.<sup>22</sup> When natural gas leaks, concentrated levels of methane can cause headaches, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, general weakness, and even loss of consciousness. Learn more about natural gas pipelines [here](#).

Other environmental issues to consider in Austin include heat, brownfields, power plants, and oil, gas, and fracking wells.

Keep an eye out for...

- Natural Gas Pipelines
- Brownfields
- Power Plants
- Oil, Gas, & Fracking Wells
- Drought
- Air Quality

# Methodology & Disclaimer

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AreaHub aggregated environmental issues across multiple data topics for the cities on Zillow's "10 Hottest Housing Markets in 2022" ranking. Using publicly available datasets provided by credible sources, AreaHub uses a proprietary geospatial algorithm that incorporates data from a variety of accepted third-party sources. The report results depend on location and the availability and accuracy of the data available in a particular region. Some areas have more detailed information than others.

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